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TYPHUS FEVER.

Since November 19, 1913, 19 cases of typhus fever have been discovered in immigrants arriving at Atlantic ports from Europe. Seven of these cases arrived at Providence from Marseille and Naples and 12 at New York quarantine, mainly from southern European ports.

Within recent years it has been demonstrated that typhus fever is spread from man to man by the body louse and that apparently this is the only way in which it is spread. This makes the control of the disease comparatively simple when it exists in small foci, and its control even in large outbreaks has been rendered not difficult.

During the latter part of February of this year typhus fever became epidemic in Tokyo, Japan, and from March 20 to April 5 there have been notified 1,750 cases. Epidemics of this size have been exceedingly rare during recent years. In the Tokyo outbreak the fatality rate has been reported to be approximately 12 per cent. This is of interest as showing the variations in the virulence of the disease. Higher fatality rates have been given in times past, also much lower fatality rates, an illustration of the latter being the absence of fatality in the type which has been present to a limited extent in New York City and undoubtedly in other American cities for a number of years. Reference is made to what is known as Brill's disease, but which is without doubt typhus fever.

Immediately upon the onset of the outbreak in Tokyo the Public Health Service officer stationed there, in cooperation with the American consul, put into operation the United States quarantine regulations as they related to ships clearing and passengers embarking for United States ports. Passengers from infected territory are detained, bathed, and their clothing disinfected. It is possible that occasional cases of the disease may arrive at Pacific ports in spite of these precautions, and they should be watched for.

SHIP RATS AND PLAGUE.

Since it has been definitely determined that plague is spread by fleas and that the fleas are carried from place to place by rodents, the question of the ridding of ships of rats has become one of para-

mount sanitary interest. Ships from earliest times have been infested with these vermin. This has been due in part to the fact that in most ships the cargo furnishes suitable food and in part to the fact that the structure of ships is usually such that they furnish convenient refuge to the rodents. As one will readily surmise grain and produce carrying ships have been especially attractive to rats.

The consequences have been that the rat has become cosmopolitan, a globe trotter, so to speak. The grey or Norway rat and also the black rat have colonized in all parts of the world, and the globe trotting on the part of these rodents still continues. It is for this reason that they are of particular significance in the spread of plague. The rat by traveling on ships has, since 1894, spread plague to all parts of the world.

Vessels frequently carry cats to keep down the rats, and recently the Surgeon General of the Public Health Service has been encouraging shipping interests to adopt the practice of periodically fumigating vessels for the destruction of vermin. Due to the nature of the construction of ships, however, the destruction of rats either by cats or by fumigation offers considerable difficulty.

In this connection the accompanying photograph is of particular interest. It was forwarded by Surgeon G. M. Corput with the following memorandum:

Every quarantine officer is familiar with the old plea of shipmasters that there is no use of fumigating the cabin of a vessel because there is a cat on board which is an excellent ratter and renders it impossible for rats to live in cabin. The inclosed pictures are the result of not believing this story. The British steamship *Ethelhilda* arrived at this station (New Orleans Quarantine) March 18 from the west coast of Africa. The captain assured me that it was impossible for any rats to be in the cabin of his vessel because of the presence of an exceptionally good cat. The cabin was nevertheless fumigated. Through the irony of fate the cat was forgotten. When the cabin was opened up the inclosed picture shows the result. Every part of ship had many rats. The picture is limited however to what was found in the cabin. One cat, 24 rats.

THE PASSING OF THE COMMON TOWEL.

On the recommendation of the Secretary of the Treasury the President issued the following executive order September 30, 1913, prohibiting the use of common towels in Government buildings:

[No. 1833½.]

EXECUTIVE ORDER.

It is hereby ordered, in the interest of the public health, that the use of roller towels and other towels intended for use by more than one person be discontinued in the public buildings of the United States.

WOODROW WILSON.

WHITE HOUSE, September 30, 1913.



CAT AND RATS FROM CABIN OF S. S. ETHELHILDA.